

"Hiram's Crossing"

The Creator, according to Iriquois legend, raked his fingers through the landscape to make the long, slender Finger Lakes which was the center of the Iriquois homeland in upstate New York.

It was there during the Presidency of James Monroe where Hiram Albro Leavens was born in Onondaga County, near Syracuse, New York in November, 1824. The area had been the long-time site of meetings of the fifty Chiefs of the Iriquois Confederation which included the five tribes: the Mohawks, Oneidas, Onondagas, Cayugas and Senecas.

It was in 1701 when representatives of Great Britain signed a peace treaty with the Iriquois Confederation. This treaty reflected the growing dependence of the British settlements on the Iriquois against the French in Quebec, the tribes' longtime enemies.

Iriquois animosity for the French dated at least as far back as 1615 when explorer Samuel de Champlain, supported by a group of French troops and other Indian allies, like Hurons and Algonquins laid siege and destroyed an Iriquois settlement near Onondaga Lake.

If the Iriquois hadn't allied themselves with the British, these words might well be written in French.

After France's withdrawal from the continent in 1763, Iriquois political leverage virtually disappeared. The American Revolution tore the confederacy apart.

Most of the Onondaga, Mohawk, Cayuga and Seneca joined their old ally the British, while most Oneida sided with the American rebels.

The Oneida nation headed by Chief Oskanondohna (Skenandoah) at the time had heard of the plight of the patriot soldiers at Valley Forge. The tribes had long been successful traders and farmers and were one of the few tribes that allied themselves with the Americans. Many fought at various battles for the cause of independence. At Chief Oskanondohna's urging, some tribe members began to walk the 400 mile journey to Valley Forge carrying close to 600 bushels of dried corn.

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The soldiers of course were starving, and if they had eaten the corn without the proper preparation the corn could have swelled in their stomachs and caused them to die. Polly Cooper was one of the Oneida women who had journeyed to Valley Forge and stayed in order to cook the corn properly for the soldiers and to help with the sick and the dying.

Many years later, William Honyost Rockwell, an Oneida leader and descendant of Polly Cooper gave this account:

"So the wives of the officers invited Polly Cooper to take a walk downtown with them. As they were looking in the store windows, Polly saw a black shawl on display that she thought was the best article. When the women returned to their homes, they told their husbands what Polly saw that she liked so well. Money was appropriated by Congress for the purpose of the shawl, and it was given to Polly Cooper by Martha Washington for her services to the Continental army. The shawl is still owned by members of the Oneida Nation, and descendants of Polly Cooper. It is kept in a vault."

In return for their allegiance with the Indians, smallpox, measles, malaria, yellow fever, diptheria, tuberculosis and other great epidemics which decimated the Native Americans were brought to them by the white man.

The loss of life from these contagious diseases was the worst misfortune that ever happened to a race of people. This is especially true of the native Americans of the Pacific Northwest where the white man's diseases made settlements more possible than did conquests by war.

In 1806, Meriwether Lewis of Lewis and Clark fame wrote that smallpox had carried-off a large number of natives near the mouth of the Columbia River. The disease four or five years earlier destroyed hundreds of Clatsops along the Columbia River. This epidemic he regarded, was that which accounted for the many deserted villages along the coast near the Tillamook Bay in Oregon.

The practice of healing among the Indians was in the hands of the medicine men and shamans. These men were found among all the tribes and were chiefs or they ranked next to the chiefs in the social organization of the tribes. They were supposed to have powers which enabled them to heal the sick, perform magic, subject others to their will and to induce the spirits to bring success to personal or tribal undertakings like war or the hunt.

Among the agricultural tribes they were regarded as able to bring rains and good crops. The medicine men took charge of ceremonies, feasts and dances. They conducted birth, wedding and funeral rites in addition to being healers, prophets and councilors.

In the Pacific Northwest and throughout the other parts of the continent, the white men were amazed at the results of the medicine men. They did their job. When someone was dangerously ill the medicine man was consulted and paid for his services without his ever seeing the patient. He was always paid beforehand and the more he was given, the sooner and better would be the cure.

The equipment of the medicine men varied from tribe to tribe, but mostly charms and ceremonial dress. In the Pacific Northwest long poles were used to beat on the roof of the lodge and make noise to scare away the spirit of the sick person. Clean sand was sprinkled in the lodge, oil was poured on the fire and a clean blanket was placed on the sick person. Sometimes it worked.

If it did not, beating on drums, making noise, yelling and screeching of friends and howling by the medicine man with wild dancing scared away the bad spirits. Sometimes that worked, sometimes not. The medical practices of some tribes included plant substances such as roots, herbs, barks, flowers, leaves, twigs, certain seeds and insects. As the white man gradually spread over the continent, his diseases came with him. These epidemics sadly were beyond the skill of the medicine man and shamans.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, a movement was made to explore the Appalachians, west of the original colonies on the Eastern Coast of the United States. By 1843, a new movement had begun; this one would later be known as the greatest migration in American history

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Hiram Leavens was the son of Augustas and Sarah Fenner Leavens. A descendant stated that Hiram's mother, Sarah was a convert to Joseph Smith and his Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, the Mormons. Augustas and Sarah followed the Mormons to Iowa about 1838 and to Carrol County, Illinois a few years later. It was in Illinois where Hiram met and married Miss Pluma St. Ores in 1849. He was twenty-five, she was nineteen.

Pluma's grandparents were Jacque Pyon (Pion) and Abigail Potter. Jacque was born in 1757 at St. Ours, Quebec and Abigail was born in Rhode Island in 1765. Their son, Pluma's father, was James St. Ores, who was born in New York State in 1802 during the Presidency of Thomas Jefferson. In 1829, James married Pluma's mother, Anna Hosmer, who was born in Vermont in 1808.

The publication of the Lewis and Clark journals in 1814 fostered national interest in Oregon Country. "Oregon Country" consisted of what is now known as the northwestern states of Idaho, Washington, Oregon and parts of Montana and Wyoming. Various groups traveled west on what would become the "Oregon Trail." Fur trappers such as Jedediah Smith, David Jackson, and William Sublette were the first group to leave wagon tracks on the Oregon Trail. In 1830 they traveled from St. Louis, Missouri to the head of the Wind River in Wyoming to gather furs. News of abundant fertile agricultural land soon reached the east and by the end of the 1830's many Americans had the "Oregon fever."

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On June 15, 1846 during the Presidency of James K. Polk, the United States and Britain signed a treaty dividing the Oregon Territory, which at that time stretched into British Columbia at the forty-ninth parallel. The acquisition of Oregon, like the acquisition of Texas, was part of President Polk's program of territorial expansion. The Oregon Donation Land Law approved by the Federal Government on September 27, 1850, provided to every settler or occupant of public lands, American half-breed Indians included, above the age of eighteen years and being a citizen of the United States or having made declaration to become a citizen, who shall have resided on and cultivated the same for four consecutive years, the quantity of $\frac{1}{2}$ section or 320 acres of land, if a single man, and if married, or shall become married before December, 1850, the quantity of one section or 640 acres, one half to himself and the other half to his wife.

That was really when it all began. People pushed Westward in search of this free land and new opportunities. Some were immigrants from Europe trying to escape poverty and religious persecution. Others sought riches or adventure.

Hiram sought his share of the American Dream and the free 640 acres of land in the Oregon Territory.

The Iowa Gazette reported: "The Oregon fever is raging in almost every part of the Union. Companies are forming in the East, and in parts of Ohio, which, added to those of Illinois, Iowa, and Missouri, will make a pretty formidable army."

Peter H. Burnett, who became the first State Governor of California, spoke of the road to the Pacific Northwest: " Mr. Burnett hauled a box out into the sidewalk, then took his stand upon it, and began to tell us about the land flowing with milk and honey on the shores of the Pacific....He told of the great crops of wheat which it was possible to raise in Oregon, and pictured in glowing terms the richness of the soil and the attraction of the climate.

And then, with a twinkle in his eye, he said "They do say that out in Oregon the pigs are running about under the great acorn trees, round and fat, already cooked, with knives and forks sticking in them so that you can cut off a slice whenever you are hungry."

As the Kentucky long-rifle and the log cabin stand for the settling of the first frontier across the Alleghenies, the sturdy covered wagon will always call to mind the winning of the West.

With the white men came towns which remained small, for the most part, for many years. The large donation land claims (640 acres for man and wife) tended to scatter the population which was almost agricultural. A few sawmills, flour-mills and warehouses were scattered here and there. Prior to the California gold rush, Oregon was far from the markets of the world. Men greatly outnumbered women, so girls frequently were married at fourteen or fifteen years of age. In Benton and Linn Counties, thirty-seven marriages were recorded in 1850 and seventy-six babies were born. Peter H. Burnett wrote of the settlements :
" I never saw so fine a population, as a whole community, as I saw in Oregon....

They were all honest, because there was nothing to steal; they were all sober, because there was no liquor to drink; there were no misers, because there was no money to hoard; and they were all industrious, because it was work or starve."

With a settled and growing population came an increasing need for physicians, and medical men were included with the wagon trains. When they reached Oregon many of the pioneers settled so far from the little towns and trading centers that physicians were unavailable or were called only in extreme emergencies. The women were the doctors in most of the homes. They used simple remedies. Bleeding was checked with cobwebs, a treatment they learned from the Indians. Whiskey was the universal medicine, used for everything from snake-bite to rheumatism. Sunflower seeds soaked in spirits for twelve hours and taken internally was a favorite remedy that worked. For bites and stings wet earth was applied or scrapings from fresh vegetables. Onion syrup was given to children with colds. Slices of salt pork applied to the throat were used for a sore throat. Castor-oil and epsom salts were commonly used whenever an individual felt ill.

The 1846 treaty with England had established everything south of the 49th parallel as definitely American, with the result that the Pacific Northwest entered a period of steady progress and development.

In his book "The Doctor in Oregon" by Olof Larsell, M.D. Dr. Larsell tells of numerous anecdotes and little known facts about Oregon doctors. I have presented here only some of his interesting stories. Doctors, some with diplomas and others with little or no medical training whose titles were self-bestowed or due to the easy going habit of calling anyone "doctor" who claimed any medical knowledge arrived from various points of the compass. They spread, as did the settlers in the 1850's chiefly to the Willamette Valley and Southern Oregon. Beginning with the early 1860's, they also went to various parts of Eastern Oregon when gold was reported there. The doctors who came ranged from high-grade men with good preparation for their day, to druggists', clerks and quacks who set themselves up as doctors. There were also many who made no pretense at medical training, beyond such knowledge as they had been able to acquire from their own reading.

A considerable number of physicians in the large immigration of 1852 took land claims and combined medical practice with farming. Some taught school. Hospitals were few. Roads in the Willamette Valley were almost impassable because of the mud during the rainy season, but the horse and buggy doctor made his rounds. The kitchen table usually was the operating table when surgery was necessary.

Quacks were numerous and unrestrained. A vivid account of one method by which they operated was made by William Lysander Adams who was in medical practice in Portland at the time he wrote the following description:

" Our drug stores are filled with patent medicines warranted to cure you and your horses too. Our sidewalks are covered with circulars and newspapers full of advertisements of traveling doctors from California or London, who will cure you of all for just such a fee in advance, as they can get out of you. Go out at 8 o'clock any evening and on most any street you will find a cure for any trouble you have of either body or soul. The Salvation Army will save your soul for nothing.

" Do you see that carriage coming down the street with a torch on either side and two California sharpers sitting just back of the driver? They wear stovepipe hats and are neatly dressed in broadcloth with high standing collars and wear massive watch chains glistening in the light of their torches. Their eyes have the squint and expression of an escaped penitentiary convict. Their foreheads are low and a correspondingly low moral brain, which enables you to read their characters at a glance.

They stop at the corner of First and Adler Streets. By this time attracted by the torches, and the music of a fiddle, there has gathered around them a crowd. The orator stands up in the carriage. He takes in the character of the crowd and begins his oration. He has a medicine for sale that will cure catarrh, asthma and all other diseases. He is a ventriloquist. Here he lifts up his dummy and makes her sing a song about Henry Ward Beecher which amuses the crowd. He then makes her say something about the value of his medicine in curing all diseases. This makes the crowd open their jaws wide. The orator takes in the situation. He sees the crowd has its' jaws spread ready to swallow something. He is equal to the occasion.

He makes an eloquent speech with loud intonations and violent gestures. 'This medicine is a sure cure for asthma, consumption, catarrh or anything else you happen to have. Anyone who buys it and is not satisfied will have his money refunded. We sold 5,000 packages here in Portland last year at a dollar a package and if there is a man here who was not satisfied, let him walk up and return it and we will refund the money.' Of course nobody does. This satisfies the crowd that the medicine is a good thing, and one poor laboring man walks up and hands over a dollar and receives an ounce bottle of magnesia, table salt and red pepper, nicely mixed. 'Now take a pinch of that' shouts the doctor, 'and see if it doesn't clean out your nose.' The victim obeys and sniffs, sneezes, snorts until the tears run down his cheeks and then he laughs. He proudly shoves the package into his pants pocket, with an expression on his face that shines out through dirt and tobacco juice, which the crowd reads as saying 'By golly, I think that medicine ain't no humbug.' Now the sharper shouts out, 'Gentlemen, if you are skeptical of this medicine, I don't blame you. You have been humbugged and robbed by your doctors until you have no faith in medicines. This world is dying with diseases medical quacks cannot cure.'

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But is there no balm and no physician here? Did God save us to suffer aches and pains and leave us no remedy? Every intelligent student of the Bible in this vast audience knows better. Every intelligent Christian prays for remedies. If God hasn't made any remedies, why do you pray for them?' Here he snatches up a package of his snuff and extending it to the crowd proceeds. "Gentlemen, we humbug nobody. We believe in dealing on the square. Please, walk up and try some for yourself. This may be your last chance to get a medicine for a dollar that will do you more good than a thousand dollars spent on a doctor. You may not be diseased now but you may be within a week after we have gone back to California, and when we come back next year, you may be down in your graves, or on your beds past cure. You know that millions of souls have been eternally lost because they failed to get religion when the preacher invited them. Don't make this mistake yourselves. Get medicine when you have a chance. Don't wait until it is too late."

Here doctor No. One sees he has exhausted his magnetic influence on the crowd and his partner carries on. This partner doctor was once a camp meeting exhorter. He has 'got religion' at last, as he says, and concludes that bodies are worth more than the souls of such as he comes in contact with. In this he is probably correct. He slowly rises from his seat and takes in the crowd as a set of ignorant asses. He hears the jingle of money in their pockets and becomes inspired.

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He takes a higher plane than the ventriloquist could reach. His shiny stove-pipe hat and his enormous watch chain and fob studded with genuine quartz, flash translucent light into the dazed eyes of the crowd. His long arms swing like saplings twisted by a whirlwind....At this point the rattle of dollars dropping into the collection-box reminds one of a gam-ler's table. It is now ten O'clock and the intelligent fellow-citizens are tired. The doctors bid them an affectionate good night, promising to be back tomorrow night, and in the mean-time they can be found at their room at the hotel where they will be pleased to relieve as many sufferers as choose to call. On reaching their rooms their street piety evaporates. They don't even say their prayers and go to bed but proceed to open their bag and count out fifty-seven webfoot dollars, as the result of their night's work. At four other doctor's stands the receipts ranged from \$20 to \$80. The doctors crawl into their beds happy, and instead of saying: Now I lay me down to sleep

I pray the Lord my soul to keep,
the ventriloquist says, "Jim, they told us the truth in California, didn't they?" "How's that?" "That there are more doggone fools in Portland than anywhere else." Jim replied, "You bet! It's a good place to gather goose feathers up in webfoot."

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One practitioner was Dr. J.W. Haines of Lafayette and Yamhill County, Oregon. He served as a steward in the Civil War and later took a course of medical lectures. He later returned to Medical School to obtain a degree from the University of Oregon. He had a reputation for great profanity from some of the stories told of him. At one time he had as a patient an elderly woman with tuberculosis. After she had been under treatment for quite a period, the patient said to him " Doctor, you know I can't get well, why don't you just tell me so?" He replied, "Why goddammit woman, if I were you I'd be glad to die. You are old and ugly as hell." Another patient, with a late stage cancer of the jaw, was being treated with morphine in large doses to alleviate the pain. He came to the doctor for more morphine, remarking that he would like to take enough to kill himself. Haines replied, " Goddammit, so would I. Take the whole bottle." Two days later the patient returned with an empty bottle, saying he had taken all of the drug, but it had not killed him. The doctor is said to have given him two bottles, but the outcome is lost to the record. On one occasion Haines received an urgent call from the hills.

He found a man with a badly mangled arm which required immediate amputation. He had brought no surgical instruments, so he boiled-up a meat saw and a butcher knife and proceeded with the operation. The patient recovered.

Home remedies were used in those days by most people, some harmless, some dangerous. A boy was struck by a rattlesnake in Linn County, Oregon. The child had been bitten while walking through a grain field. His sister carried him to a neighbor who immediately cut-open a chicken and put the boy's foot in the fowl's abdomen to 'draw out the poison'. The neighbor then tied a tourniquet below the boy's knee and set-off on horseback to get Dr. Prill who came as quickly as possible. But, by the time he reached the boy three hours had elapsed and the little boy died.

Dr. Theophilus Degen came to Oregon in 1844. He was born in Germany about 1809 and was educated in one of the south German Universities, probably Leipzig. He had come to the United States sometime in the late 1830's because of political troubles in his native Bavaria, and appears to have practiced medicine for some time in New York. By 1844 he had reached Missouri and joined a wagon train for Oregon. He was best remembered by members of the party as the "German doctor," or the "Dutch doctor."

He settled in Scottsburg where he kept a store and attended to the ills of the few settlers in the region. He sold his store and built and operated a road house for travellers until 1855 when he enlisted in the Rogue River Indian War. Afterward he took up a homestead near Oakland, Oregon where he responded to the calls of the sick in a radius of forty miles. Frequently he was absent for weeks at a time living in the homes of his patients until they recovered or died. He was fond of children and when he was expected at a home, the children would line-up on the fence posts as he passed by. He carried a comb and scissors and would cut the children's hair as needed. The women of the district thought a great deal of Dr. Degen. When they saw him drive-by with his horse and cart they would say, "There's going to be another baby somewhere." He is said to have delivered three thousand babies without a loss. Dr. Degen was not known ever to have sent a bill to anyone. The settlers had little cash and as a rule gave him potatoes, grain, meat or other things in payment for his services.

He was found dead in his cabin several days after he died. His body was described as 'frozen to the floor.'

The isolation of some of the settlers and the frequent lack of medical and surgical supplies constantly hampered treatment and tested the doctor's ingenuity. These primitive conditions and the poverty of most of the people made the practice of medicine most difficult for the physician.

Dr. Larkin Vanderpool came to Oregon from Missouri in 1852. He practiced medicine, having obtained his knowledge of the subject from reading for the purpose of administering to members of his family. He was called upon to treat his neighbors so often that he was obliged to charge fees because of the time he lost from work on his farm. He originated and manufactured the "S.B. Remedies", made chiefly from Oregon herbs. He is said to have deposited one hundred dollars in the bank to the credit of every baby he delivered who was named after him, the boy to receive the money when he came of age. Dr. Vanderpool was greatly loved in Wasco County. His funeral procession is said to have been a mile long.

An amusing obstetrical incident was the case of 'Daisy', who was married some months after she became pregnant, although the pregnancy had been carefully hidden from Daisy's "old man" because he was handy with a shot-gun. The mother, however, knew the situation. One day the doctor was sent for, with the message that Daisy was dying. Being ill himself at the time, the physician refused to ride horseback the twenty miles to his patient, but travelled in a buggy, which was much slower. On his way he was met at various times, by four different messengers who urged him to hurry, all with the message, "Daisy is dying." When he arrived within a quarter of a mile of the house he could hear the girl screaming and yelling, and slowed down his tired horses on the ground that if she could yell so lustily the girl still must have considerable strength left. When the doctor arrived at the house he found that every time the girl had a slight twinge of pain, her mother gave her a shot of whiskey, just enough to keep her in the excitement stage. Between pains, Daisy giggled drunkenly, followed by screams at the top of her lungs when the pangs came on again. The doctor administered an anesthetic and delivered the child without difficulty. Daisy's father, who had been working some distance from the house, came to inquire the cause of the tumult. "Why, Daisy has a baby," he was told. "The hell she has!"

Medical practice in the early 1880's was not sufficient to keep all the doctors in Union County, Oregon occupied or content with their income. At Summerville one of them, whose name is not given, laid the plans for robbing a stage coach carrying a box of gold, presumably for the workers on the railroad then under construction in the region. The stage was held-up and the box taken, but some suspicion of the hold-up came to those in charge of the gold. It had been removed and rocks substituted before the would be robbers got the box. The hold-up men returned to Summerville where two were jailed, while two others were captured later in Idaho. Nothing is known of what became of the doctor involved.

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Gregory M. Franzwa wrote : Other than the Civil War, no single event in the Nineteenth Century American history produced more first-hand narratives than the great migration to the Oregon Territory. They wrote at any time and to any one. They left graffiti on rocks. They recalled their adventures in newspapers, magazines and dime novels. More than three thousand personal historians told of the Oregon Trail experience. The large number of diarists is remarkable considering the conditions the authors had to endure. Pencils, pens, inkwells and paper all had to be brought with them.

Time was very limited, the only time available to write was the last hour of daylight after the animals had been tended, meals made and cleaned-up and chores completed. The average emigrant walked ten to fifteen miles each day. Many wrote on occasional laundry days, at forts or during Sunday rest stops. And write they did. Men wrote, women wrote and of course, children wrote as memoirs later in life. It is estimated that 40,000 of the emigrants were children, one of every five(except during the Gold Rush years, when the trails were crowded with single men).

Many children were hesitant to go. They were sad to leave home, and worried they would never see or hear from their friends again. They also had to leave behind most of their worldly possessions. Wagons had to hold food and supplies for the trip, but there was little space for toys, books or clothes. For some the trip was a great adventure. Other kids faced great hardships such as sickness or death of parents, starvation, and accidents. There was however, time for playing and exploring and visiting with new friends. At night there was singing and dancing around the campfire.

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Most kids were so busy with chores that school was set aside during the journey. Many read from the family Bible to improve their reading skills. They learned a lot from their adventures on the trail, but formal schooling had to wait until they were settled in Oregon.

Jesse Applegate was 7 years old when he made the trip in 1843. Years later he recalled: "We children were much surprised and delighted to find beads, generally small and white in color. The ground was white with them, and looking up discovered that we were under a broad platform thickly strewn with corpses of dead Indians. After this ghastly find we did not tarry long, for the shades of evening were now creeping along the ground. I remember one afternoon, when the teams were tired and some of the oxen limping with sore feet, I was looking far away in the direction we were traveling, across a dreary sage plain, to all appearances extending to the end of the earth, and I got to wondering where we were trying to get to, and asked the question, when someone said, "To Oregon."

Hiram and Pluma's first son was Turner Fenner. He was born in Illinois in January, 1851. The following year, in October, 1852 they had Emma Teressa. She was born in Fulton, Illinois. That year Hiram left his wife and two children and crossed the great plains alone. He headed west on the overland route known as "The Oregon Trail." A family story tells that before he left for Oregon, Hiram worked for a doctor, and when the doctor died, Hiram was left the medical books. He did have training of some kind as the early settlers left written testimony as to his ability.

In the Year 1856 Hiram, then known as Dr. Leavens, is said to have fought in Oregon against the Indians who had massacred some settlers. He had made a claim in Oregon with a partner, a man named "Pierce."

Dr. Leavens returned home on schooners and steamers from San Francisco and his claim in the Oregon Territory by way of the Isthmus of Panama. He stopped in New York at his former home in Onondaga County on his way back to his family in Illinois.

In 1859 he organized and was made Captain of a wagon train in Illinois. There he made plans to cross the plains a second time, now with his family.

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Emma Teressa Leavens was born in Fulton, Illinois on a warm Fall day, October 8, 1852. Fulton lies on the Mississippi River opposite Clinton, Iowa. Emma was the first daughter and second child of Hiram Albro and Pluma St. Ores Leavens. Emma aged seven, with her brother Turner, eight and baby sister Annie crossed the plains and mountains with their parents in 1859. It had been seven years since Hiram had previously made the trip alone. The barrier of the Great Plains had been breached and Hiram knew the way to the Oregon and Washington Territory's. He also knew that the distance they had to travel exceeded two thousand miles. The journey had to be made in one jump between winter and winter. There were two sayings at the time: "The cowards never started", and "Only madmen started." It took roughly \$800-\$1,000 to put-together a proper outfit, including wagon, food, clothing, etc. and enough supplies to live a whole year without planting or harvesting a crop. Some families saved for three to five years before being able to begin their trip west.

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Back in Fulton, Illinois, Hiram then about two months before his thirty-fifth birthday, began building his 'house on wheels.' He knew it had to be both light and strong. Along the trail on his earlier crossing he had seen the results of poor and flimsy wagon-building. The body or bed of his wagon was basically a wooden box. It was ten feet long and four feet wide. About fifteen inches from the bottom of the bed he built a false floor. The lower space was divided into compartments that would be used to remove the clutter and store extra supplies.

The next project was to build and sew the cover or top of the wagon and make it a truly 'covered wagon'. It was made of canvas or 'twill' as it was called then, that had been made waterproof with two coats of paint or linseed oil. Some wagon trains painted their canvas covers a bright red or blue. This way the individual families would know to which group of wagons they belonged. Hiram's group would chose a bright green with each family's name printed in black paint.

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The heavy canvas had to be supported by six bows of bent hickory. There were carefully hand-sewn flaps at the front end and a 'puckering rope' at the back end which allowed ventilation or a complete closing. It was now a "Prairie Schooner" in memory of the white-topped schooners of the sea.

Other neighboring farmers in the Fulton area joined Dr. Leaven's group and elected Hiram as its' Captain. Others asked to join the Leaven's group for various reasons: some farmers feared a coming agricultural depression because of the prolonged drought, others tried to escape the malaria that inflicted huge areas of the Mississippi Valley. Others were attracted by what they heard of the Oregon and Washington Territory's: the climate, the rich farmland and the chance to get ahead. Some city-folk were lured by the love of adventure. There was in 1841, even an absconding banker who fled the police and potential jail-time. One man simply said he always liked to fish, and he had heard that there was good fishing in Oregon.

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Captain Hiram, as he was sometimes called, insisted that the order of the wagons both on the trail and in camp would be strictly regulated. It had to be to survive. At night the wagons would, he stressed, be drawn into a circular corral, and alert guards were kept to prevent a surprise attack by hostile Indians. All the parties in the group agreed to these basic principles. Each wagon had to be equipped with grease buckets, lumber for repairs, toolboxes and chains for locking the wheels during steep descents through the mountains. Hiram as Captain, had to see to that.

The journey was expected to take four to five months and Hiram knew full-well the difficulties his group would be facing on the trail. The journey could not begin until the grass stood at least several inches high and could sustain the oxen and livestock. To pull their wagons, some emigrants and freight operators used both oxen and mules. Price usually determined the choice: an ox could be bought for one third the cost of a mule. One price-list of the period gave the cost of a mule as \$75 and an ox as \$25.

As between the mule and the ox, however, there always were endless arguments around the campfires, punctuated by tobacco juice spat into the embers.

"Mules move faster."

"Yes, but oxen can pull more."

"Oxen don't stampede so easy."

"Yes, but when they do, they run worse."

It seemed it could go on forever. Mules bogged-down in mud, but could live on the bark of cottonwood trees. The Plains Indians would steal mules but not oxen. Oxen, however, were more likely to get sore feet. On and on the argument went. The expression "dumb as an ox" has seldom been found in the diaries of emigrants. Oxen seem to have been at least as intelligent as mules and much more so than most horses. In the end most people who headed West were "ox-team emigrants." The number of oxen per wagon varied greatly. Four was the minimum. Six was perhaps the average and twelve was probably the maximum that could be handled on the twisting mountain roads. There was no place for sentiment on the desert and the ox that began to fail was the one to be butchered. This was another virtue of the ox...he could become food.

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Some of Captain Hiram's group took four oxen and two dairy cows. Others took six oxen. Almost all took at least one dairy cow. Fine china was carefully packed in barrels of flour and cornmeal. This packing technique was designed to prevent family heirlooms from being destroyed during the long journey. In theory this was a good idea, but there was one serious drawback--usually, the travelers had to eat the flour and cornmeal during the trip, and most of the dishes ended-up breaking anyway and had to be discarded along the trail.

Hiram and the other leaders had to make extensive lists for the incredibly long trip westward. Typically their lists included: five hundred pounds of flour, three hundred pounds of cornmeal, fifty pounds of beans, one hundred pounds of rice, fifty pounds of cheese and butter, and four hundred pounds of sugar. Also purchased for the journey were barrels of crackers, tea, coffee, salt, bacon, ham, dried beef, dried fruits and vegetables. Brought along for the preparation of meals was a campstove, cooking kettles, Dutch ovens and frying pans. Besides the necessities for cooking was the need for adequate cleaning supplies. Washtubs, washboards, flatirons, starch and soap were also brought along. Many times sewing machines were also packed for the journey.

That Year, 1859, nature cooperated and during the third week of May, the Leaven's party was ready. At the same time Abraham Lincoln was debating Stephen A. Douglas for the senate seat of Illinois. Though Douglas won the election, Lincoln had made his mark by the debates and was now a potential presidential candidate.

Having by then sold their land, farms and belongings too heavy to carry west, the emigrants bid tearful farewells to their relatives and neighbors. They all knew they would never be reunited. The group traveled down the Mississippi River to St. Louis where they booked passage on shallow-draft steamboats for the three-hundred-mile, four to six-day voyage up the Missouri River to the booming frontier-town of Independence.

There were fifty wagons ahead of them on the river and it took three more days to reach the unloading docks. Before they boarded the steamboats, however, the wagons had to be knocked-down again to obtain a lower shipping rate. The more prosperous pioneers kept their wagons in one piece. After the river voyage, the wagons were re-assembled.

* * * *

The history of the Missouri frontier is mostly a story of the quest for fur, primarily the fur of the beaver. Long before settlements and farms appeared in Missouri, men roamed the frontier seeking fur. The furs were obtained mostly by trading with native American tribes who had inhabited the Missouri country for thousands of years.

The French pioneered the quest for beaver, followed by the English, then the Americans. Thus, several types of frontiersmen appeared on the Missouri frontier, dressed and equipped according to the mix of their own culture and the native cultures among whom they lived.

It all began with Prince Rupert of the Rhine and Duke of Bavaria, a 17th Century renaissance man. He was a combination of Sir Galahad, a dandy, and a dashing Cyrano de Bergerac. He and his fellow adventurers obtained a charter from his uncle, England's King Charles II in 1670. Under the charter, they would become absolute lords and owners of all the seas and lands of Hudson Bay and its entire waterway system in the new world. The territory granted them was named "Prince Rupert's Land."

Trading with the native peoples there would bring them huge profits from beaver skins and other furs. Today the British royal family still owns a share in the Hudson's Bay Company. The company encompassed nearly 3 million square miles—ten times the size of the Holy Roman Empire at its height. One ecologist estimated that in 1670 there were at least 10 million beaver in Canada.

Hudson's Bay Company or HBC as it was known, prospered because of the Castor canadensis, the New World beaver, and of course the latest European fashions. Before the umbrella, beaver felt hats were an elegant way to keep the European men dry. It became more mania than swank.

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Men and women in the 1700's and early 1800's were instantly placed within their social structure according to their hats and the clothing they wore. Beaver headpieces became so valuable that they were willed by fathers to their eldest sons. By 1854 over 500,000 beaver pelts had been auctioned off in London alone. Hudson's Bay Company accountants calculated that they sold 3 million skins in the 24 years between 1853 and 1877. Men risked their lives and reputations in a feverish trade for the pugnosed rodent with its lustrous fur.

The beaver is a non-migratory animal that needs a large space to thrive, so that once a creek was "beavered-out". The hunters had to move farther and farther into the new land. The hunt for the beaver became the quest for two nations... Canada and America.

Throughout most of the fur trade, business was conducted by bartering with the native Americans. European or American goods such as blankets, beads, jewelry, guns, ammunition, whiskey, sewing awls, cloth, mirrors, knives, cooking vessels and iron tomahawks were traded to the native Americans in return for beaver pelts. Later, following the Louisiana Purchase from France in 1803, native Americans became more aggressive toward intruders on their lands. The 'mountain men' as they were known, then had to abandon the barter system and do their own trapping.

Joseph Robidoux was a well seasoned frontiersman, shrewd businessman and a visionary. He was born in 1783, one of seven sons of Joseph Robidoux and Catherine Rollet. He spent most of his childhood in St. Louis, Missouri. In 1799 at the age of sixteen, young Joe was trading and travelling up the Missouri River with fur trappers and traders. In 1803 his father sent him to organize a trading post at Fort Dearborn, Illinois, the site of present-day Chicago.

His early success there irritated other traders who hired Indians to harass him. They eventually drove him from the area. He returned to St. Louis. In 1826 he was hired by the American Fur Company to establish a new trading post at the Blacksnake Hills.

He could see that the trickle of emigrants heading west would continue and grow. He hired two men to sub-divide the land around the trading post and began laying-out a new town that he called "Saint Joseph." Plans for the town were filed with the clerk of Common Pleas in St. Louis on July 26, 1843. Within two years initial lots that were selling for \$100 were selling for \$500. By then there were over 600 residents in 'St. Joe' as it was called and they all had their sights on trying to fleece the newcomers heading west.

Merchants, gunsmiths, blacksmiths, livestock dealers, saloon keepers and dance-hall women all saw the emigrants as easy marks. They knew the emigrants had cash in their pockets after selling their farms and applied their hard-sell techniques to separate the settlers from their savings.

The Missouri hucksters persuaded the emigrants that it was foolhardy to cross the plains without canoes, featherbeds, snake-bite oil , several tons of food and whatever else they had on their well-stocked shelves. The pioneers believed what they heard and bought and bought.

As farmers they had no real experience with firearms. Now they all had bought guns to protect themselves on the prairie. Missouri's gunsmiths and gun suppliers hawked revolvers, rifles, bowie-knives and boxes and boxes of ammunition to some emigrants who never fired a shot before. Now they had something to play with. Stray deer, foxes, coyotes, dogs and hogs were their target practice, as well as an occasional bystander. A few years after the founding of St. Joe, doctors prospered in the area. They even agreed upon a uniform set of charges. They would visit their patients within one mile of their office for a fee of one dollar. Each additional mile cost fifty cents and the rates were doubled after dark.

Once on the scene of the patient, the physicians would treat small blisters for fifty cents. Large ones for seventy-five cents. Enema's cost a dollar and small tumors would be removed for \$2.50. Babies were delivered for five dollars. Twins were delivered for ten dollars. Fingers and toes were surgically removed for five dollars. Many gunshot wounds helped the doctors to prosper.

Passing overlanders usually paid twice as much for their 'store- bought' goods as did local residents. During the spring migration season, the price of everything was jacked-up. For example, in 1849 a bushel of corn which normally sold for fifteen cents, cost a dollar during April and May, the height of the transient-trade. The price of ham went from three cents a pound to twelve cents a pound. Butter rose from eight cents to twenty-five cents. The smiling merchants charged whatever they thought they could get.

Independence was known as the "Queen City of the Trails" because like St. Joe, it was a point of departure for the Santa Fe, California and Oregon Trails. Independence was originally inhabited by Missouri and Osage Indians, followed by the Spanish and a brief French tenure. It became part of the United States with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. Lewis and Clark recorded in their journals that they stopped in 1804 to pick plums, raspberries and wild apples at a site that would later form part of the city.

Independence quickly became an important frontier town. It was the farthest point westward on the Missouri River where steamboats or other cargo vessels could travel, due to the convergence of the Kansas River with the Missouri River approximately six miles west of town, near the current Kansas-Missouri border. Independence immediately became a jumping-off point for the emerging fur trade, accomodating merchants and adventurers beginning the long trek westward on the Santa Fe Trail.

Francis Parkman, an earlier traveller wrote: "A multitude of shops had sprung-up in Independence to furnish the emigrants and Santa Fe traders with necessaries for their journey and there was an incessant hammering from a dozen blacksmiths' sheds where the heavy wagons were being repaired, and the horses and oxen shod."

A few farsighted emigrants hauled cargos that were burdensome on the trail but would be nearly worth their weight in gold when they reached the Oregon Territory. One of these was Henderson Luelling who had been a fruit-grower in Iowa. In 1847 with his wife, eight children and four wagons, he joined a party bound for Oregon. In one of his wagons were a number of young, grafted fruit trees: apple, pear, cherry, and a few black walnut and hickory trees. Luelling's daughter Eliza thought her father cared more for his nursery-stock than he did for his family. On the North Platte River he was advised that trying to take the trees any farther was foolish. According to Luelling's son Alfred, "Father's answer was an emphatic "NO". Once they reached the Willamette Valley, he cleared land and began planting more graftings from his trees.

Parkman 7

Within three years he had 18,000 new trees which he began selling at a dollar each. Eventually he earned a million dollars in the nursery business.

Similarly other visionary's bought farm and ranch animals. Livestock were bought cheaply in Independence and St. Joe and herded to Oregon and California where they were sold at high prices to arriving emigrants. Profits were as huge as the risks. An ox could be purchased for thirty dollars in Independence and sold for a hundred and twenty dollars in Oregon. Cows were bought in Missouri for twelve dollars and sold for a hundred and sheep bought for a dollar and a quarter went for eight to twelve dollars. After 1855 the boom years of the livestock business were history and the Oregon Territory was filling-up and becoming self sufficient. By 1860 Pony Express riders carried the mail from St. Joe to Sacramento, California in about thirteen days.

The Leaven's and other travellers followed the Santa Fe Trail as far as present-day Gardner, Kansas. Sometimes there were forty to fifty wagons in a company. Overton Johnson would write:

"Having pitched our tent and kindled a fire, supper was soon prepared...we slept to dream of all that we loved and had left behind us, and awoke to know that they were far from us and that our home was the wild, uncultivated field of nature."

Keturah Belknap earlier wrote : " In the next wagon behind ours a man and a woman are quarreling. She wants to turn back and he won't go, so she says she will go and leave him with the children and he will have a good time with that crying baby."

At Gardner the trail angled northwest across the prairie and along the Little Blue River.

Two earlier settlers, Eugenia Zieber in 1851 and Sarah Sprenger the following year, wrote: " We took our dinner here, which consisted of bread, crackers, chip beef, cheese and cold fried meat. This we held in our hands and sat on logs, stumps, etc., to partake of it. Many would look upon this as a most awkward way of eating, but I think it really pleasant. The sky above you clearly seen, not kept from your sight by any obstructing roofs. "

" The trees looking fresh & happy around you, and flowers peeping up from the bright grass, as though desirous of taking notes of your proceedings. Who would then not prefer this to a table profusely covered with dishes filled with dainties of every kind, shut up in a house, the work of art! Give me rather fair Nature's shed abroad to my view, and twill lend a charm to everything."--Eugenia Zieber, 1851.

and

" Along the trail, we saw buffaloes wallowing in their mudholes, and many antelope. Once in a while boys would kill an antelope, which made delicious meat. We found that buffalo meat was too coarse, and bear meat too greasy to eat much, but that prairie hens were a real delicacy. Often we had to cook with grease wood or sagebrush. We had iron pots and teakettles for cooking, and did our baking in a Dutch oven with coals under it and over it. It was difficult for my Mother and sisters to work and cook this way, as we had been used to a large house, a cook stove and brick oven, and maid to do the hard work. When our cow gave plenty of milk we put the milk in a large tin can and hung this can on the wagon, where the jolting would churn the milk to butter."--Sarah Sprenger, 1852.

The travellers had never seen anything like it-- wild flowers to the horizon and not a tree in sight. Just outside of Gardner, Kansas a simple sign read--"The Road to Oregon."

One of the Leaven's first obstacles was the Wakarusa River with its' steep banks. Compared to what was coming, crossing the Wakarusa was rather easy. Now the Kansas and Kaw Rivers lay ahead of them. It was a good day when they travelled twenty-miles. Sometimes along the rivers the mud was almost six-feet deep.

The Kansas thunderstorms, among the most violent on the continent, terrified the pioneers. The storms usually formed in the afternoon when the huge clouds to the west developed their anvil-tops. A slight breeze began popping the canvas on the wagons. Rolling thunder was heard over the prairie and the breeze became a driving wind. The frightened travellers climbed into their wagons and prayed as the rains and sometimes hail came. Soon the canvas tops were soaked and the continuing rain-storm drenched the inside of the wagon.

storms

Some earlier writers described the storms as follows:

"The thunder seemed almost incessant, and the lightning was so brilliant you could read by its flashes. The men chained the oxen so they would not stampede, though they were very restive. Our tents were blown down as were the covers off our prairie schooners and in less than five minutes we were wet as drowned rats. You have no idea of the confusion resulting with the oxen bellowing, the children crying and the men shouting, the thunder rolling like a constant salvo of artillery; with everything as light as day from the lightning flashes and the next second as black as depth of the pit."--Benjamin F. Bonney, 1845.
and

"Such sharp and incessant flashes of lightning, such stunning and continuous thunder, I had never known before. The woods were completely obscured by the diagonal sheets of rain that fell with a heavy roar, and rose in spray from the ground. The storm ceased as suddenly as it began. The thunder here is not like the tame thunder of the Atlantic coast. Bursting with a terrific crash directly above our heads. The lightning flashed all night."--Francis Parkman, 1846.
and

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"We had a dreadful storm of rain and hail last night and very sharp lightning. It killed two oxen. The wind was so high I thought it would tear the wagons to pieces. Nothing but the stoutest covers could stand it. The rain beat into the wagons so that everything was wet. In less than two hours the water was a foot deep all over our camp grounds. As we could have no tents pitched, all had to crowd into the wagons and sleep in wet beds, with their wet clothes on, without supper."--Amelia Stewart Knight, 1853.

And then it was finally over, and the storm passed to the east.

The Leaven's family had a terrible fright one day on the prairie. They were chased by a group of Plains Indians on horseback. Their daughter Annie who was then a baby, fell out of the moving wagon, but was unhurt. Yelling, the Indians saw this, started laughing and turned back. Further on the trip, the entire family, including baby Annie, had to walk behind the wagon to spare the oxen. Later they found on the side of the trail an Indian who had recently been killed.

12

Three earlier travelers wrote these words:

" I saw a so-called prairie-dog village. Here we had a whole colony before us. The animal digs itself holes underground. Such dwellings, at moderate space from each other, can be spread over an area of several acres, or even miles. At a man's approach they raise a fiercer cry, wagging their short tails withal, as if prepared for serious combat."

Dr. Frederick A. Wislizenus, 1839.

" Stopped to kill a buffalo. Saw hundreds of prairie dogs barking about. They are about as large as a grey gopher. Killed 3 buffaloes. Their flesh is generly coarser and dryer than beef but a fat buffalo heifer is as good meat as I would wish to taste of."

Elizabeth Dixon Smith, 1847.

" One night, my oldest sister and I were going from one wagon to another one and a big wolf came up. We didn't stay to see what he wanted!"

Sarah Sprenger, 1852.

13

At Lawrence, Kansas, a few miles east of Topeka, the Oregon Trail split. During high-water of the Kansas River the lower trail would flood, so they would need to find a trail higher up. During low-water times, the lower trail would work fine.

West of Topeka the pioneers crossed the Black Vermillion River and then on to the banks of the Big Blue River.

Nancy Coon, another earlier pioneer, wrote: " Eighty-nine wagons camped on the Big Blue River. Chilly. Eighteen miles."

Henry Garrison in 1846 wrote: " At the crossing of the Big Blue River he met David English, the same age as he and described him as a "bully among the boys always ready for a fight." On several occasions, English tried to beat-up or even kill Garrison, a Methodist preacher's son. Some years later, English apparantly came to an unpleasant end in Idaho, where he is believed to have been hung by a vigilante committee for robbing miners.

Earlier travellers wrote:

" Found here a company that got into a fight among themselves. Burnt fragments of wagons, stoves, axes, etc., with a great quantity of harness cut to pieces; and with a quantity of torn shirts, coats, hats all besmeared by blood."--James Evans, 1850.
and:

" Young shot Scott dead. The company had a trial and found him guilty. They gave him a choice to be hung or shot. He preferred being shot, and was forthwith."--Charles Gould, 1849.
and:

" Horace Dolly killed Charles Botsford yesterday by shooting for which the company killed said Dolly today, by hanging. Said Dolly had a wife and two children."--John Dalton, 1852
and:

" Today we passed seven graves. Two were placed tolerably near each other one bearing the inscription " Charles Botsford murdered June 28th 1852; The murderer lies in the next grave": The other bears the inscription of "Horace Dolly hung June 29, 1852"
--Abigail Jane Scott, 1852

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Soon the travellers entered today's Nebraska. Just Northwest of Oak, Nebraska the emigrants entered "The Narrows." This landmark was named for the area that caused travel to slow down to a crawl. It was an area between the Little Blue River and the bluff on its east bank. Wagons and cattle alike had to travel single-file. It was a haven for rattlesnakes.

Ahead lay the Platte River, which would guide them for the next six hundred miles. Nancy Coon earlier wrote: "Sunday. Passed one company. Blue Earth River. Saw some antelope. Cool. Twenty-five miles."

John A. Stoughton reported that the great buffalo were so abundant that their caravan often had to resort to gunfire to prevent the huge black herds from trampling the wagons. He wrote : "Their hoofs sounded like thunder and we could hear the rattle of their interlocked horns for miles." Edward H. Lenox several years earlier reported that a stampede of three thousand animals passed within two hundred yards of their caravan before tumbling head-long over a twenty-foot embankment and into the Platte River.

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Nancy Coon wrote: " Laid by. Two companies passed us, one of thirty-three and one of eighteen wagons, and one came up within three or four hundred yards and camped near us. Church man from Washington County, Iowa came up, whom we left with a friend of his from the same place by the name of Scott, who died May 31 on Blue Earth River. We fished and hunted today, caught nothing, killed two jackrabbits, and measured the Platte River by wading it with a rope. Made it one and one quarter miles wide.

In her book 'Wagon Wheel Kitchens', Jacqueline Williams writes: Even though their route followed the Missouri, Platte, and Sweetwater Rivers, keeping the water keg filled was not an easy task. " Camped without water " was a recurring phrase in the emigrant's diary. Going without affected the mood of the travelers, as Charles Gray, an emigrant on the way to California, so graphically tells us:"At a wood, we took in quite a lot and also some water, and before I could get the casks full, the train moved on. So the consequence was that although we had supper and a little water to wash dishes with-yet we had nothing to drink during the evening when we were thirsty--nothing to wash in the next morning, or cook with till 12 O'clock then next day when I luckily fill'd 2 canteens with dirty water to drink.

This may appear a very small matter, but it was a great annoyance and I merely mention it to show how great a deprivation the loss of a few gallons of water is on the plains."

Guidebooks advised the emigrants on where to camp and find fresh water, but they were not always up to date or checked for accuracy. For example, if in the year a guide was written numerous storms had filled the rivers, plenty of water could be found. A year later the travelers might find streams dried up and the expected water long gone. Bemoaned Celinda Hines, who traveled to Oregon Territory in 1853: "We had to get our water out of the river and carry it up a hedge of rock sixty or eighty feet high and very steep and then a quarter of a mile to our wagons."

In certain areas of the trail, particularly along portions of the Platte River, the water was sullied with noxious bacteria and contained "salt or alkali substance, white as snow and half an inch thick." Many attributed the recurrent diarrhea to the polluted water and doctored themselves with vinegar, an all-purpose drink that was said to cure any ill. They even fed it to the cows that became sick from drinking too much alkaline water. Finding fresh water was a daily task. When the water keg was empty dinner was cold hardtack with nothing hot to wash it down.

To get rid of river water mud and silt the emigrants used cornmeal as a makeshift filter. A drinking vessel was filled to the top with the muddy water and a handful of cornmeal added. After twenty minutes the mud, or at least most of it, was carried to the bottom with the cornmeal. The water on top would be reasonably clear and, with care, could be siphoned off. If there was no time to wait, the water was drunk, mud and all.

It was commonly said among the emigrants that before they reached Oregon territory everyone had eaten a 'peck of dirt'. One diarist wrote that they "generally get a pint of mud out of every pail of water."

Finding water for cooking and drinking was but one of the difficulties the emigrants encountered on their long journey west. That they persevered and found ways to cope with such a fundamental challenge to survival made it possible to withstand their long, strenuous 'camping trip'. Their ability to adapt and "make do" not only made the trip successful, it helped prepare them for an arduous life in the new territories. Certainly a bit of Yankee ingenuity was tucked into those all-purpose provision boxes.

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There were also lighter moments on the trail:

"Near the river a violin makes lively music, and some youths and maidens have improvised a dance upon the green. But time passes; the flute has whispered its' last lament; the violin is silent, and the dancers have dispersed; enamoured youth have whispered a tender "good night" in the ear of blushing maidens, or stolen a kiss from the lips of some future bride--for Cupid here, as elsewhere, has been busy bringing together congenial hearts, and among these simple people he alone is consulted in forming the marriage tie."

Jesse Applegate, 1843.

and:

" The moon, I think must have been near the full...we leveled off a space and one man played the fiddle and we danced into the night."--John Minto, 1844.

and:

" A wedding occurred in our company. The bride's cake was made with turtle eggs found in the creek. The event was celebrated by a dance on the grass under the stars."--Lucy Hall, 1845.

Familiar songs written in 1851 were: "Wait For the Wagon." One verse went like this..."We'll have a little farm, a horse, a pig, a cow; you will mind the dairy, while I will guide the plow." another song was "Uncle Sam's Farm." Other old favorites included: "At the Foot of Yonder Mountain" and "Other Side of Jordan."

It would only be a few years later when the emigrants began singing the songs of Stephen Foster. His songs--such as "Oh ! Susanna", "Camptown Races", "Swanee River", "My Old Kentucky Home", "Old Black Joe" and "Beautiful Dreamer"--remained popular over 150 years after their composition. Many of Foster's songs were of the blackface minstrel show tradition which was popular back east at the time.

Most of his songs were written in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He never saw Kentucky or The South. For " Oh Susanna", he received \$100 but he died nearly destitute in January, 1864 in a cheap hotel on the Bowery on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, in New York City. He was only 37.

Dr. Israel Lord wrote in 1849: " Imagine to yourself a biped five feet four inches high, with big whiskers, red mustachios, steapl-crowned hat, buckskin coat, done up with hedge-hog quills, belt, pistol, hatchet, bullet pouch, bowie knife 20 inches long, red shirt and five-inch spurs. It seems to me that the boys take pains to make themselves ridiculous."

Hiram Leavens and his group always sought campsites with firewood, grass and water. When unable to find any firewood, they followed the advice of the mountain-men. They gathered buffalo chips from the prairie. They were also called " meadow muffins" or " prairie coal." This task fell to the children. At first they handled the chips with two fingers.

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Later they sailed the dry, unoffensive dung, like modern-day frisbees. This natural abundant fuel burned hot and slowly with no unpleasant odor. Where they found 'chips', they found buffalo which supplied ample amounts of fresh meat. Nancy Coon wrote: " Fifty-one wagons in camp on Platte River. Cold rain. Twenty miles."

In many wagon trail groups, once every couple of weeks the women spent a full day doing the wash. As one emigrant woman wrote: " Camilia and I both burnt our arms very badly while washing. They were red and swollen and painful as though scalded with boiling water. I do not see that there is any way of preventing it, for everything has to be done in the wind and sun." Other women would write :

" I would make a brave effort to be cheerful and patient until the camp work was done. Then starting out ahead of the team and my men folks, when I thought I had gone beyond hearing distance, I would throw myself down on the unfriendly desert and give way like a child to sobs and tears, wishing myself back home with my friends and chiding myself for consenting to take this wild goose chase."--Lavina Porter

"All our work here requires stooping. Not having tables, chairs, or anything it is very hard on the back."--

Lodisa Frizzel

and

..."one does like a change and about the only change we have from bread and bacon, is bacon and bread."--

Helen Carpenter

Cecelia Adams wrote:"Had a rather disagreeable time getting supper. Our buffalo chips burn rather poor as they are so wet."

As the Leaven's group continued west along the Platte River, the land changed before their eyes. The prairie became sand hills and sandhills became foot hills. Westward the party travelled past future stations of the 'Pony Express' and past concealments which the hostile Indians sometimes used to attack the unsuspecting wagon trains.

When supplies of axle-grease ran out, they used buffalo tallow to lubricate the wheels.

Often the bucket contained tar or any oily substance mixed half-and-half with tallow. Since this smelly mess was used steadily to grease the wheels it didn't last very long. Before the end of the journey, the emigrants might be using anything that came in handy. A Mormon in his 1847 crossing shot a wolf, apparently for rifle practice. He found the animal to be very fat, so he tried the fat out and added wolf grease to the mixture in the bucket.

Many oxen by this time dropped under their yokes and were left where they fell. Often they were merely abandoned, too weak to follow and left to the wolves. Sometimes a kindly bullet finished the matter. Except for a little meat cut-off for food, no one bothered with the carcasses. On some stretches they lay so thick that a blind man could have followed the trail by the stench. Then for a few years the skeletons lay dazzling white in the desert sun and pale white under the moon.

The teams plodded monotonously westward. Heat, dust and mosquitoes! Quarrels, resulting from too-long associations in the same company!

An earlier diarist wrote these words:

"Dear Harriet the little trunk you gave me has come so far and now I must leave it here alone. Poor little trunk, I am sorry to leave thee. Thou must abide here alone and no more by thy presence remind me of my dear Harriet. This shall be thy place of rest. Farewell little trunk. The hills are so steep rocky that Husband thought it best to lighten the wagon as much as possible and take nothing but the wheels, leaving the box with my trunk. If I were to make this journey again I would make quite different preparations."-- Narcissa Whitman, 1836.

In 1836, Dr. Marcus Whitman, Rev. Henry Spaulding and their wives crossed the Rockies; Eliza Spaulding and Narcissa Whitman being the first white American women in Oregon Country. They settled at a place called 'Waiilatpu' (The Place of the Rye Grass), near Ft. Walla Walla only six miles from the present-day city of Walla Walla, Washington. Eleven years later this would become the site of the Whitman Massacre (also known as the Walla Walla Massacre and the Whitman Incident.)

It was the scene of the mass murder on November 29, 1847 of missionaries, Dr. Marcus Whitman and his wife Narcissa Whitman along with eleven others. They were killed by Cayuse and Umatilla Indians. The incident began the 'Cayuse War.' It was one of the most notorious episodes in the American settlement of the Pacific Northwest.

The killings are usually ascribed to a clash of cultures and the inability of Dr. Whitman, a physician, to halt the spread of measles among the Native Americans, who held Whitman responsible for subsequent deaths.

Among the many new arrivals at the Whitman Mission in 1847 was a man named Joe Lewis, a very bitter man. He attempted to spread discontent among the local Cayuse, hoping to create a situation in which he could ransack the mission. He told the Cayuse that Dr. Whitman, who was attempting to treat them during a measles epidemic for which they lacked immunity, was, in fact, not trying to save them but instead was deliberately poisoning them. This talk enraged the Cayuse. A common practice among the tribes of the Columbia Plateau was that the doctor, or shaman, could be killed in retribution if patients died.

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As you can see, a doctor in Indian country had little security. It is probable this may have been the reason for killing Dr. Whitman. It was also claimed by anti-Catholic ministers that Roman Catholic priests may have told the Cayuse that Dr. Whitman was the cause of an outbreak of cholera and incited the Indians to attack. The motivation of the priests was portrayed as a desire to take-over the Protestant station which had refused to sell goods to them. Sadly, Chief 'Beardy' tried in vain to stop the massacre, but failed. He was found weeping while riding towards the mission to warn them. Another fifty-four women and children were captured and held for ransom. Several of these prisoners died in captivity.

On December 29, one month later, Peter Ogden, an official of Hudson's Bay Company arranged for an exchange. For the return of the surviving prisoners, the Indians would get sixty-two blankets, sixty-three cotton shirts, twelve Hudson Bay rifles, six hundred loads of ammunition, seven pounds of tobacco and twelve flints.

Eventually, 2 tribal leaders who had been present at the incident and 3 additional men consented to go to Oregon City (then capital of Oregon) to be tried for murder. At the trial, the five Cayuse Indians who had surrendered, used the defense that it is tribal law to kill the medicine man who gives bad medicine. All five of the Native Americans were found guilty. On June 3, 1850 they were publicly hanged. The story of the massacre shocked the United States Congress into action concerning the future territorial status of the Oregon Country. The Oregon Territory was finally established on August 14, 1848.

* * * * *

In 1852 Harriet Scott, on the Oregon Trail wrote:

" The oxen were worn out, and the wagons were in poor condition to cross the mountains. Some wagons had to be left; some of the oxen were poisoned eating mountain laurel."

also:

" We passed today the nearly consumed fragments of about a dozen wagons that had been broken-up and burned by their owners,

and near them was piled up, in one heap, from six to eight hundred weight of bacon, thrown away for want of means to transport it further. Boxes, bonnets, trunks, wagon wheels, whole wagon bodies, cooking utensils, and, in fact, almost every article of household furniture, were found."--Capt. H. Stansbury, 1852. and:

" From the South Pass the nature of our journeying changed, and assumed the character of a retreat, a disastrous, ruinous retreat. Oxen and horses began to perish in large numbers; often falling dead in their yokes in the road. The heat dried wagon, striking on rocks or banks, would fall to pieces. As the beasts of burden grew weaker...teams began to be doubled and wagons abandoned. Every thing of weight not absolutely necessary must be abandoned."--George B. Currey, 1853.

Nancy Coon wrote: "Passed three companies in the evening on a small ravine running into the Platte. They had two Roman Catholics in their company. They were stalking around among the men with their long robes on and their bibles under their arms praying to God to help them out. He didn't. We passed altogether ninety-four wagons in the low bottom on the Platte, a great many fast in the mud. Three miles and camped on the prairie. Fifty-one wagons in camp."

Some diarists wrote the following:

" This is the first day of summer, beautiful day. The prairie is covered with beautiful little flowers whose fragrance surpassed any garden flowers. There is a modest little white flower which peeps up among the green grass which particularly strikes my fancy. I call it Prairie Flower. Autumn sun will bring the more gorgeous flowers. There are frogs in the ponds that talk a different language from our common ones."

Harriet Buckingham, 1851.

and:

" Just as we were ready to sit down to supper Joe Meek and his posse of men rode into camp. They were going to Washington, D.C. to get the government to send soldiers to protect the settlers in Oregon and they told us all about the Indian massacre at Walla Walla called the "Whitman Massacre". They had travelled all winter and some of their men had died and they had got out of food and had to eat mule meat so we gave them all their supper and breakfast. They made way with most all my stuff I had cooked up."

Keturah Belknap, 1848.

and:

" I carried a little motherless babe five hundred miles, whose mother had died, and when we would camp I would go from camp to camp in search of some good, kind motherly women to let it nurse, and no one ever refused."--Margaret Inman, 1852.

Forty miles northwest of the Platte River rose stark geological formations which the travellers called Courthouse Rock, Jail Rock and the most imposing of them all, Chimney Rock which was mentioned more often than any other landmark in the diaries of other Oregon-bound pioneers.

Entering present-day Wyoming, the group headed for Fort Laramie and their first sign of civilization since leaving the states.

It was the 4th of July. A few years earlier Harriet Buckingham wrote: " This morning of the glorious fourth, we breakfasted at six upon trout, strawberries and cream."

Agnes Stewart wrote in 1853 : " July 4th. Scarcely any person expects to have a little more than usual today, while we are going on our weary journey. They are playing fiddles and dancing and I can shut my eyes and think I am at some gathering just like I used to be."

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Jacqueline Williams writes: "Picnic baskets were not miraculously opened by the campfire when the emigrants paid tribute to Independence Day. Colorful firecrackers did not explode over the plains. But for some, Fourth of July celebrations with special foods, toasts of good cheer and 'guns bursting in air' occurred up and down the Platte and Sweetwater river valleys along the Oregon Trail."

"How amazing it is that the travelers, weary from at least two months of journeying across the continent, still had the energy to prepare for a party. If possible, overlanders tried to celebrate the Fourth of July in the vicinity of Independence Rock, in central Wyoming. The rock derived its name from the common wisdom of overland travel that advised emigrants to be at that juncture by Independence Day so as to reach the Cascades or Sierra Nevadas before the early snows.

Emigrants on the trail referred to the midday rest period as "nooning". During this time they prepared meals, searched for water and fuel, and if they were lucky, rested."

"Distinctive foods were just part of the William Swains' Fourth of July celebration. The group honored the day with speeches, songs and toasts: 'We lay abed late this morn. After a late breakfast, we set about gathering fuel for cooking our celebration dinner. Our celebration of the day was very good, much better than I anticipated....At twelve o'clock we formed a procession and walked under our national flag to stand to the tune of "The Star Spangled Banner...." We then marched to the "hall", which was formed by running the wagons in two rows close enough together for the wagon covers to reach from one to the other, thus forming a fine hall roofed by the covers and a comfortable place for the dinner table, which was set down the center.

Dinner consisted of: ham; beans, boiled and baked; biscuits; johnycake; apple pie; sweet cake; rice pudding; pickles; vinegar; pepper sauce and mustard; coffee; sugar and milk. All enjoyed it well.

After dinner the toasting commenced. The boys raked and scraped together all the brandy they could, and they toasted, hurrayed, and drank till reason was out and brandy was in."

"I stayed till the five regular toasts were drunk; and then, being disgusted with their conduct, I went to our tent, took my pen, and occupied the remainder of the day in writing to my wife."

Considering the fact that most of the cakes were probably baked in Dutch ovens or with tin reflectors strategically placed over makeshift dirt ovens, one realizes how important it was to the travelers to celebrate this holiday. By placing hot coals or 'chips' on top of the lid and underneath the bottom of the iron pot, skilled cooks could make fresh bread, savory pies and hot stews in the versatile Dutch ovens.

The following is a description of the Conyers Party's Independence Day Feast:

"The day was ushered in with the booming of small arms, which was the best that we could do under the circumstances, so far away from civilization....All gathered around the tables loaded with refreshments, beautified and decorated with evergreens and wild flowers of the valley, that speak volumes in behalf of the good taste displayed by the ladies, both in the decorative and culinary arts.

The following is our bill of fare in part:

MEATS

Roast Antelope, Roast Sagehen, Roast Rabbit, Antelope Stew, Sagehen Stew, Jack-Rabbit Stew, Antelope Potpie, Sagehen Fried, Jack-Rabbit Fried.

VEGETABLES

Irish Potatoes (brought from Illinois), Boston Baked Beans, Rice, Pickles.

BREAD

White Bread, Graham Bread, Warm Rolls, fresh from the oven.

PASTRY

Pound Cake, Fruit Cake, Jelly Cake, Sweetwater Mountain Cake, Peach Pie, Apple Pie, Strawberry Pie, Custard Pie. (A dozen or more varieties, both of cake and pies not enumerated).

DRINKS

Coffee, Tea, Chocolate, and Good, Cold Mountain Water, fresh from the brook....

Take it altogether, we passed an enjoyable day--a Fourth of July on the plains never to be forgotten."

"Of course, it was a matter of mathematical certainty that some of us would get 'glorious' upon the 'Glorious Fourth', and most gloriously were all such patriotic resolutions carried out," Matthew Field, wrote to his paper, the New Orleans Daily Picayune. For large numbers of weary travelers, no Fourth of July was complete without copious toasts accompanied with appropriate beverages.

Not everyone, of course, got drunk. Some really did just drink a toast. The holiday remained a celebration of patriotism and a connection to those back home. As John Adams predicted, noise and dressing up, a display of the flag, and brilliant and boring orations are "celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival."

* * * * *

In 1815 or 1816, Jacques La Ramee and a small group of fellow trappers settled in the area where Fort Laramie would later be located. He went out alone to trap in 1819 or 1820 and was never seen again. Arapahoe Indians were later accused of killing La Ramee and putting his body in a beaver dam near the mouth of Sybille Creek. The fort was named "Laramie" in his honor.

The inhabitants of Fort Laramie also known as Fort Platte welcomed the emigrants; on July 14, John Boardman wrote that "he went to a dance, where some of the company got gay. Pleasant."

At the fort they obtained needed services and purchased supplies at outrageous prices. The traders at the post over the years kept the peace with the twenty-five hundred Oglala and Brule Sioux lodges which stood nearby. Nancy Coon wrote: " Camped at a Sioux Indian town quite a trade was got up between the women and squaws trading beads and other trinkets for bread and meat. At Fort Laramie the old Chief told us we had to pay him for passing through his country.

The commander at the post told us it was customary to give him something. He spread down his blanket and each man put on his pay, some flour, some meat, coffee, beans, peas, dried fruit, etc. He was well pleased. Pleasant. Twelve miles."

Eight miles west of Fort Laramie the trail passed a tall sandstone and white chalk bank that the earlier traveller's nicknamed 'Register Cliff'. Thousands of names and inscriptions were carved there and many survive today. A few miles farther the wagons of the 'Great Migrations' left tracks which were deepened by thousands of subsequent wagons and cut four feet into the hillside.

* * * * *

Over the years one emigrant in twenty died along the trail. Thousands to accidents; thousands to diseases; hundreds to snake bites. Most who died were buried right on the trail. Few had markers since wood was scarce. Rocks, however were plentiful. Of the known deaths along the Oregon Trail, cholera was the leading cause. The present day state of Nebraska was the deadliest state for cholera.

Ninety-six percent of all cholera deaths occurred by the time the emigrants reached South Pass. The disease "cholera" was first reported in the United States during the years of 1832-1834. St. Louis lost a tenth of its population to this disease. Many pioneers thought that by going west they might be able to escape this disease. But as one emigrant diary read, "The road from Independence to Fort Laramie is a graveyard." Another emigrant put the number of burials at 1,500 to 2,000 at this point on the trail, while yet another put the death total at around 5,000. Many hundreds left their bones along the trail buried in unknown graves. Some diarists however, wrote these words:

Died: "Of cholera...Of cholera...Of cholera."

Died: "Of accidental discharge of his gun."

Died: "Of drowning." Often, simply: "Died."

Died: "From Southport, Wisconsin...Late of Buffalo, N.Y.
Late of Galena, Illinois...Of Selma, Alabama
From Yorkshire, England."

Died: Sometimes with only the name for identification

Died: "Mrs. Mildred Moss, wife of D.H.T. Moss."

Died: "Mary, consort of J.M. Fulkerson."

Some gravestones read:

M. DeMorst, of Col: Ohio,
died Sep. 16th. 1849
Aged 50 years, of Camp Fever.

Jno A. Dawson, St. Louis, Mo.
Died Oct. 1st, 1849
from eating a poisonous root at the spring.

Mr. Eastman;-
The deceased was killed by
an Indian arrow; Octr. 4th, 1849

Saml. A. Fitzzimmmons, died from
effects of a wound received from a
bowie-knife in the hands of Geo. Symington
Aug. 25th 1849

Samuel McFarlin, of Wright Co Mo. died
27th Sep. 1849, of fever, Aged, 44 years.-
May he rest peaceably in this
savage unknown country

Jno. Hoover, died, June 18. 49
Aged 12 yrs. Rest in peace,
sweet boy, for thy travels are over.

Died: "Mrs. Emmaline Barnes, Amanda and Mahela Robbins,
three sisters in one grave, Indiana."

There were graves without names: "The remains of a dead man
dug up by wolves, and reburied."

In 1843 one of the early caravans suffered a sad tragedy. The nine-year old son of A.J. and Nancy Hembree was doing something very dangerous- riding on the tongue of his family's wagon, balancing between the oxen. Perhaps the wagon lurched into a rut. "He fell off the wagon tongue and both wheels run over him," recounted an eyewitness. The company continued into camp with the unconscious boy who died there the next day. James Nesmith, travelling two days behind the ill-fated family reported seeing " a fresh grave with stones piled over it, and a note tied on a stick, informing us that it was the grave of Joel J. Hembree who was killed by a wagon running over his body.

In December, 1961 almost a hundred and eighteen years later, a rancher collecting rocks for a dam he was building found a rock with a chisled inscription that read " 1843 J. Hembree," Because the new dam threatened to flood the gravesite, a team of experts excavated the grave and found the perfectly preserved skeleton of the unfortunate boy, partially covered by an oak dresser drawer. The boy's remains were placed in a new pine box and reburied on higher ground.

* * * * *

When the travellers reached the halfway point on the long trail to the Oregon Territory, Independence, Missouri lay 814 miles behind them. They still faced more than a thousand miles of wilderness. Ahead in Wyoming lay the Wind River Range, a part of the Rocky Mountains. A party of fur traders travelling east from the Oregon Territory in 1812 had discovered a great pass through the mountains. In 1844 Elisha Stevens broke the barrier of the Sierra's and took wagons across what would later be called the "Donner Pass."

The pass was named after a group of emigrants who were travelling from Illinois and Iowa to California. In the winter of 1846-47 they met with one of the most famous tragedies in Western history. Prominent among them were the two Donner families and the Reed family. In going west they took a little-used route and were delayed when they reached what is today Donner Lake in the Sierra Nevada's. The families paused to recover their strength and an early snow caught them. The snow fell deep into the passes trapping them. Their food gave-out and the cold and snow continued. Some of the starving members of the party were driven to cannibalism and only about half of the original party of 87 reached California. Near Truckee, close to the California and Nevada border there is a monument to the party sometimes called the "Doomed Donner's". Hiram Leavens and his party would go through that pass to the Pacific Northwest. The first water they found there flowed toward the Pacific Ocean. They had crossed the Continental Divide and were now in Oregon Territory. The journey ahead lay downhill.

*Ted here
about
mountain house*

Early one morning Hiram felt that someone or something was watching them as they broke camp and got ready to move out. Not a leaf moved, not a bird called out. Then, less than a hundred feet away on a rocky ledge he saw it. 'The cat of one color' as some native Americans called it. Other tribes referred to it as 'the ghost of the Rockies.' Some white hunters and mountain-men called it a cougar or puma. Others called it a panther. All knew the big cat to be a mountain lion.

After watching each other for what seemed several minutes, the cat suddenly was able to leap a span of almost fourteen feet, cross a stream, a rugged hillside and a sagebrush flat. Hiram turned to call Pluma and the children. In an instant the huge cat was gone into a stand of aspens.

Hiram had heard that such a cat was out there in the desert and foothills. Now he knew just how large the animal was. Just then, Turner came from behind the wagon. The boy of eight was still rubbing his eyes when Hiram put his arms on the boy's shoulders. "Son, he said, I just saw the scariest animal I ever did see. Don't you ever leave your sisters out of your sight." From the stand of nearby aspens, they heard the cat howl. The sound was like a woman's scream.

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The wagon trains slowly rolled northwest to Fort Hall on the left bank of the Snake River, a great tributary of the Columbia. Near Fort Hall, Narcissa Whitman wrote : " Our dinner consisted of dry Buffalo meat, turnips and fried bread, which was a luxury. Mountain bread is simply coarse flour and water mixed and roasted or fried in Buffalo grease. To one who has had nothing but meat for a long time, this relishes well. For tea we had the same, with the addition of some stewed serviceberries." She also wrote: " At Fort Hall was our first sight of the Snake River. We have passed many places where the soil is good, and would be fertile if there were frequent rains; but usually the country is barren, and would be a sandy desert were it not for the sagebrush."

The road continued across a barren desert to the Boise River where they followed it to the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Boise near the junction of the Boise and Snake Rivers. Again they had to cross the difficult Snake River. The present State of Oregon now lay beneath their feet. They arrived at the Malheur River where a few wagons turned-off to head south to California.

Dr. Leavens and his party continued north along the Green River where earlier A.H. Garrison wrote: " The party's first contact with Indians was a Crow war party of four hundred warriors along the Green River. They swapped horses and left satisfied. Later, along the Applegate Trail near Klamath, unfriendly Indians had to be fought-off three times. Two people were killed." The party continued their trek. They now faced the Wallowa Mountains and went through them as they did with the Blue Mountains until they reached the Columbia and the Lower Cascades. There again they broke their wagons down and loaded them on flat boats to float down the mighty Columbia River. Some of the ferryboats were old scows that were propelled by oars. The more timid travellers drove the cattle down the trail. James Coon wrote: " Sat Sep 18th. Left the river after coming down it four miles. Came seven miles and left the road, went one mile to the river and camped. Grass and wood are scarce. I lost two of my oxen, Jack and Jerry. A few Indians standing around offered to hunt them down for two shirts but I hunted for them until I got so tired hunting I could go no further.

Then I accepted their offer, whereupon they mounted their ponies. Presently they returned with the oxen and I finished the bargain by giving them two shirts. We have been traveling in a company of twenty-five wagons. Since coming to the Columbia River I have learned that smaller companies have been robbed by Indians. Hot. Eleven miles."

It was in this pattern that pioneer families from the East settled in the Pacific Northwest. As the Willamette Valley filled, new arrivals moved north into present-day Washington State and South into Oregon's central valleys. Nancy Coon wrote: Sat Oct 9th. " In camp on a small ravine. Little grass. We upset our wagon again today in a big mudhole where the road made a turn around the end of a log. We spilled all we had, even our sack of gold and silver in all amounting to five dollars. All said, we had a muddy fingering getting it all together again. Six miles. Cloudy."

Sun Oct 10th. " Came two miles to the FIRST HOUSE IN OREGON !!! To the second house three miles. Some grass. Here we camped. Five miles. Pleasant. I am thankful, for the Lord has been merciful.

Earlier travelers had written these entries in their diaries:

"Rations grew shorter and shorter. One meal was prepared by boiling an antiquated ham bone and adding to the liquid in which it was boiled the few scrapings from the dough pan in which the biscuit from our last measure of flour--which, by the way, was both musty and sour--had been mixed. We still had coffee and by making a huge pot of this fragrant beverage, we gathered round the crackling campfire--our last in the Cascade Mountains--and, sipping the nectar from rusty cups and eating berries gathered during the day, pitied folks who had no coffee."

Catherine Scott, 1852.

"Our provisions ran out. Mr. Noland had a pony. We might kill her and all eat her together. Proceeded to kill and butcher the pony. It took but a short time for all hands to get her ready for use. But we had no salt and she made very poor beef. We took all the flesh we could conveniently get off the bones which we made into jerk for convenient packing. Killed a large mallard duck, which was a nice addition to our dry pony rations."

Benjamin F. Owen, 1853

"The old mountaineer,--"Peg Leg Smith," came into camp. He has a cabin and trades with cattle, whiskey, etc. His leg was injured and he took out his knife and amputated it himself, and afterward dressed it, and fortunately recovered."

J. Goldsborough Bruff, 1849

Thomas L. Smith, better known as 'Peg Leg' Smith 1801-1866, was a mountain man, prospector, and spinner of tall tales. Legends regarding his lost gold mine have grown through the years, and countless people have searched the desert for "Peg Leg's Lost Mine." They are still searching. The famous legend began during a trapping expedition down the Colorado River in the late 1820s or early 1830s. Pegleg and his party had acquired a large number of pelts during their trip and selected Pegleg and another member of the trapping party to take the supply of pelts across the desert to Los Angeles for sale.

During the journey through the desert, Pegleg had gathered some pebbles which he found on top of a butte in the Colorado Desert. He gathered the black pebbles thinking they were copper and carried them to Los Angeles where he later discovered they were gold. The gold is believed to be near the Anza Borrego desert in Southern California.

Every year on the first Saturday of April the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park attracts story tellers from all over the globe to compete in the annual Peg Leg Smith Liars Contest. All comers are welcome to enter the contest. Stories should be of no more than five minutes in length. Costumes and other original touches are always appreciated by the crowd and judges.

Another emigrant wrote:

"Whole distance traveled from St. Joe on the Missouri River to the Willamette Valley, one thousand seven hundred and eighty-nine miles. Days traveled on the road, one hundred forty one. Days laid by or didn't travel twenty-two."

1852 was the Year of the Bloomer, although few women emigrants wore this new fashion item. The bloomer offered a woman the chance to become more practical in regard to attire during their overland journey. Mariett Foster Cummings chose to wear bloomers to avoid the mud. Eliza Ann McAuley and her sister dressed in the height of fashion as they wore bloomers with light calf-skin top boots for wading through mud and sand. Most women preferred skirts.

"Of the fortitude of the women one cannot say too much. Embarrassed at the start by the follies of fashion, they soon rose to the occasion and cast false modesty aside. Long dresses were quickly discarded and the bloomer donned. What a picture! Elderly matrons dressed almost like little girls. The younger women were rather shy in accepting the inevitable but finally fell into the procession, and we soon had a community of women wearing bloomers."--Ezra Meeker, 1852

According to the diary of May Ellen Murdock Compton, a 1853 emigrant, she started from Independence, Missouri with ten brand new pairs of shoes and wore all of them out except the last pair. She saved this pair for the Oregon country by walking barefoot over the last miles of her journey.

Those who made the trip experienced a great adventure, and most of them, including the Leaven's children: Turner, Emma and baby Annie, probably had the time of their lives. J.T. Kerns, who arrived in Oregon in 1852 wrote: "This is the best and most beautiful place we have seen on the whole road, or in fact, in our lives."

The fact is that nine out of ten emigrants made it safely to Oregon. Most of the women who set out on the Oregon Trail survived to help their families put down roots in the West, but not many of them were happy about it, at least to begin with. The emigrants, it should be recalled, usually set out in April or May and arrived in October or November--just as the winter rains were setting in. Thus, their first impressions of Oregon were affected by the gray, damp days of wintertime in the Willamette Valley. Perhaps suffering from seasonal depression on top of everything else, a significant minority of emigrants probably would have turned right around and started back home if their wagons and oxen had been in any shape to travel.

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"My most vivid recollection of that first winter in Oregon is of the weeping skies and of Mother and me also weeping. I was homesick for my schoolmates in Chicago and I thought I would die. We knew no one in Portland. We had no use for Portland, nor for Oregon, and were convinced that we never would care for it."--Marilla Washburn Bailey.

Given some time to adjust, though, most of the emigrants ended up well pleased with their new homes.

"When the snow was three or four feet deep in Wisconsin, I picked wild flowers in Oregon. Everything around me, so far as nature was concerned, was charming to behold."

Emeline T. Fuller

Elijah Briscow wrote to his family in Illinois: "Your mother and myself are getting old but we shall live many years longer here no doubt, than in Illinois. You may think the journey will be attended with many difficulties, but if you will fix as I advise, it will be no killing job, for I tell you honestly, that if you were all here with only an outfit and two year's clothing, with three cows per family, you would be better off than you now are with all you have."

" You will find the journey a summer excursion or a pleasure trip, if you are not too anxious. Get good strong wagons, with five or six yoke of oxen to each, and make light yokes. Bale all your feathers, extra bedding, etc., by making a box to fit a mold. Make the bales small, so as to be easily handled. Bring all your books in trunks or light boxes, your meat and flour in sacks. Bring a tea-kettle, bake oven and skillet; use tin dishes on the road. Some people have only a frying-pan to keep house with on the road, live principally on beans and soup, mush and milk, with meat occasionally. Stop in the Buffalo country and dry meat; waste not a particle of anything; give none to the Indians. Admit them not into your camp. Rise early and keep moving. Do not push or fret your cattle by whipping them, for they will give out on the latter part of the road, where they are most needed- never get irritated. The road is the place to try men's souls; those who are clever there will be clever anywhere. Start by the 20th of March, and be at St. Joseph's on the first of May almost at the peril of your lives ! Be up and better yourselves ! Loitering will never do !

" Pick your company; get among Christians, if possible. Strive to be in the first company. Now my dear family adieu ! and may the God of peace preserve you wholly till we are all permitted to meet on this distant shore, and again unite our voices in singing those solemn lays which have so often cheered our hearts whilst I was with you, and the memory of which, causes me to sigh for the society of my long absent family.-Adieu."

* * * * *

Who were these 'pioneers' that shared their observations and innermost feelings with us? Here are only a few:

Applegate, Jesse (1811-1888). He joined the "Great Migration" of 1843. Helped establish the Applegate Trail from Ft. Hall in Idaho to the Klamath Basin in Oregon.

Belknap, Kenturah She traveled to Oregon from Iowa with her husband and young son in 1848.

Bruff, J. Goldsborough (1804-1889). He was an artist, draftsman and 1849 Gold Rush traveler.

Coon, Nancy (1827-1907). She and James were married in 1847 and two months later went to Oregon. He was 34, she was 20. They had 14 children.

Currey, George B. He was a Colonel in U.S. Cavalry that protected wagon trains and gold miners in the Blue Mountains of Oregon and Washington.

Fulkerson, James Monroe (1803-1884). He was a Baptist minister.

Knight, Amelia Stewart She started west from Monroe Co. Iowa while in a state of advanced pregnancy with her husband and 7 children in 1853. Delivered her 8th child on the roadside and entered Oregon in a canoe, the flat-boat across the Columbia River. Her first home was a log cabin with no windows. She made no complaints in her diary.

Meeker, Ezra (1830-1928) He walked the Oregon Trail. Later he crossed it by auto, train and airplane later in his life.

Minto, John (1822-1915). Born in England, the son of a coal miner and gunsmith. Emigrated to U.S. in 1840. Crossed the plains in 1844 with the Gilliam Company. He became a sheep farmer. Joined the volunteer army in the Cayuse War after the Whitman Massacre in 1847. Later elected to the Oregon House of Representatives.

Owen, Dr. Benjamin F. (1835-1888). He was an Elder in the Church of Christ.

Scott, Abigail Jane. (1834-1915). American women's rights advocate, Newspaper editor and writer.

Sprenger, Sarah She crossed the plains to Oregon in 1852. On the trail a Nez Perce Chief offered to trade some of his ponies for Sarah's sister, Maria. They had to hide Maria from him thereafter.

Whitman, Narcissa Prentiss (1808-1847). She was a missionary in Oregon County, Washington. The first woman to cross the Rocky Mountains and build the Whitman Mission near Ft. Walla Walla. She was killed by Indians November, 1847, age 39. This 'massacre' began the Cayuse Indian War.

Wislizenus, Dr. Friedrich A. (1810-1889). He was born in Germany. Emigrated to America and traveled west with the Rocky Mountain Fur Co. Crossed the Rockies with a band of Flathead and Nez Perce Indians in 1839.

The Leavens Family and their company eventually crossed the plains and the mountains and arrived at the Lower Cascades, Washington Territory in October, 1859, just in time. Ahead was the coming Winter. There they established a farm.

When day was done, Pluma Leavens would work until after midnight at her spinning wheel. She wove and knitted the wool that she washed and dyed after cutting it from their sheep. From that wool she made clothes for the family, including suits for the boys. She worked until one or two in the morning and rose before daylight. Every evening Pluma had a practice of sweeping the floors and carpets before retiring.

In 1886 when he was sixty-two, Dr. Hiram Leavens retired from active medical practice. He had been the only physician in a territory that extended from Salmon Creek, Washington to Vancouver on the Washington side of the river and to Troutdale on the Oregon side of the Columbia River. Although their land claim was in Oregon, the family lived in Skamania County, Washington. Before that in 1878 and 1879 Dr. Leavens was Sheriff of Skamania County and later Justice of the Peace.

He had been involved in several land transactions. A lease dated December 12, 1883 records he was a resident of Wasco County, Oregon. He received two tracts of land in Skamania County, Washington from President Andrew Johnson dated July 2, 1866.

When the railroad was being built on the Oregon side of the Columbia River, Dr. Leavens ran a general store on a barge which was towed up the river as the crews built the railroad. When they reached Cascade Locks, he moved the merchandise into a building in which he had a drug store and the post office. Dr. Leavens owned three farms on the Washington side of the river besides his land grant near Warrendale, Oregon. He sold the farms to his children, usually for one dollar, between 1882 and 1895.

Dr. Hiram Albro Leavens died in the Spring of 1906 at Cascade Locks, Oregon. He was eighty-two years old. His wife, Pluma had died there three years earlier. It was however, their daughter Emma who invested her share of the inheritance wisely.

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She did not hesitate to foreclose on loans when there was no other recourse. A family story tells that she loaned some money to a music teacher who was unable to pay, so she arranged to give all of her grandchildren music lessons.

Her funeral will be remembered by all of her grandchildren who attended in Portland, Oregon on September 20, 1921. The day had begun in fog. By mid-morning the sun broke through. The autos went up the Columbia River Highway to Bonneville. There her son Horace, nicknamed 'Pug' had arranged for a large launch, the 'Thelma' to take the party to the Washington side of the river. Members of the Cascade tribe of Indians were camped on the shore where the 'Thelma' landed. They had been fishing for Salmon and their catch had been cut-up and hung on racks and bushes to dry in the sun. When the pallbearers lifted the casket, the Indian women, most of them who knew her, began their death cry. It sent shivers down the spines of all the children. The entire tribe and the family followed Emma's casket to the Greenleaf Cemetery just west of North Bonneville, Washington. The Indians also used a portion of the cemetery. Some of their bodies had been wrapped in blankets and tied high in the trees.

Emma Leavens Reed was only sixty-nine years old.

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In January, 1867, six years after arriving in the Oregon Territory, Emma Teressa Leavens married William Robert, the son of William and Jane Reed. The marriage license was issued in Stevenson, Washington. He was twenty-nine, Emma was not yet fifteen years old.

William Robert Reed was born in Louisiana in March, 1837. At an early age he moved with his parents to Council Bluffs, Iowa where they homesteaded a farm. He told his son George a story that at the age of eight he laughed at his father when the latter fell into a pig sty. Before he was a teenager, William Reed ran away from home and worked in Iowa in a general store for a man named Jonathan Stutsman. There he learned the trade of a wheelwright, making and repairing wheels. At that time there was a great demand for wagon and cart wheels as the Mormons were assembling on the West bank of the Missouri River.

There opposite Council Bluffs they were preparing for the long journey to Salt Lake, Utah.

As a young man, Robert Reed went West to Denver, Colorado and worked as a surveyor. At the outbreak of the Civil War he returned to Iowa and enlisted. The state could not provide his Company with arms and his Company was mustered-out. He returned to Denver where he traded some lots he had acquired, for a horse and migrated West to Portland, Oregon. His son, George stated that his father worked clearing land in what is now downtown Portland. He was given a city lot for each one that he cleared. Leaving the Portland area, William Reed started for the gold mines in Eastern Oregon stopping at what was called the Lower Cascades. It was there where he met and married young Emma Teressa Leavens.

After their first son Hiram was born in 1868, William Reed went to the Powder River Valley at Baker, Oregon. He planned to work in the gold and silver mines. He was badly injured when a mine tunnel collapsed. Because of this back injury, he walked with a cane the rest of his life.

Unable to continue mining, he planted a large vegetable garden near Baker. There he sold the crop in the fields and to the general store. William Reed returned to the Cascades where he and his wife, Emma operated a saloon on a barge in the river. With the money they saved from the saloon they were able to locate on a claim next to the land of Dr. Leavens, Emma's father. In 1886 they bought Emma's father's farm, and established a creamery and planted an orchard. The butter went to Portland for sale.

Until the railroad was built, the best means of transportation was by sailboat. Their son Horace, 'Pug' told of sailing up the Columbia River to the Cascade Locks to visit his grandparents.

In 1906 the Reed's moved to Portland. William died there in 1911. Emma in 1921.

William and Emma Leavens Reed had eight children:

William	born 1868	died 1953	Aged 85
Horace 'Pug'	born 1870	died 1944	Aged 74
Edna	born 1872	died 1953	Aged 81
Ethyl	born 1876	died 1878	Aged 2
Minnie 'Myn'	born 1879	died 1964	Aged 85
Rush	born 1881	died 1898	Aged 17
Emro	born 1886	died 1898	Aged 12
George	born 1890		

Their fifth child, Minnie Mabel 'Myn' Reed was born on the family farm on the Columbia River, just West of Warrendale, Oregon. After attending a one-room school she took music and painting lessons and received her teaching credentials from the Oregon State Normal School in Portland. She later taught in Eastern Oregon, and in a school near Fairview, Oregon, where she again met her future husband, George Horace, the son of John Q.A. and Mary Adams Hurlburt. They had met earlier at a country dance. They were married in April, 1904.

They had three sons:

George Roy	born October 8, 1905
Warren Robert	born June 12, 1907
Glen Horace	born August 29, 1909

Minnie 'Myn' Reed Hurlburt suffered a stroke in 1964 which left her unable to walk. Her son Roy and her grandchildren Beverly and George took her from where she was living in San Francisco to Lodi, California where she entered a convalescent hospital. She always loved tea and the nurses made tea for her any time day or night. She passed away after asking for a cup of tea, in February, 1964.

Her ashes were buried in the family plot in Greenleaf Cemetery, just west of North Bonneville, Washington. Her husband's story follows:

George Horace Hurlburt was born in September, 1879 on the family farm in Multnomah County, Oregon. He was the youngest child of John Quincy Adams Hurlburt and Mary Adams Hurlburt. George attended school in a school house on some property his father donated for that purpose. John Quincy taught him engineering so that by the time he finished school he went to work as a surveyor. He became a licensed civil engineer in charge of surveying parties in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. In 1911 at age thirty-two George was in charge of building one of the reservoirs on Mt. Tabor, near Portland. After that he worked for the Pacific Bridge Co. He was commissioned a 2nd Lt. of Engineers during World War I. After the war he joined the U.S. Prohibition Dept. and was transferred to Seattle and then to San Francisco. In San Francisco, he and two other agents caught the distillery at Sausalito delivering large quantities of alcohol to illegal sources. The government seized the distillery and later sold it to the American Distilling Company.

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For this work all three agents were fired from their duties because a U.S. Senator was on the payroll of the distillery. They were all hired the next day quietly by another government agency. George was placed in charge of the Chicago office at the time Al Capone was the bootleg king. In 1936 he was brought to San Francisco because several bootleg stills were operating and government agents were on the payroll. He was able to learn who the agents were. Those men were either fired or transferred to North Carolina. He retired in 1943 and moved to Olympia, Washington. He was always an avid fisherman and loved fishing or clamming in Puget Sound. He died in 1949 in Olympia.

As previously stated, George and Minnie 'Myn' Hurlburt

had three sons:	George Roy	born October 8, 1905
	Warren Robt.	" June 12, 1907
	Glen Horace	" August 29, 1909

The following words were written in 1995 by George Roy Hurlburt: "Here we are ninety-years after my birthday on October 8, 1905. And this is not the end of my life which I think of as an interesting adventure.

It has been interesting to me. Perhaps it may be interesting to you."

In 1905 when George was born, his father was the engineer in charge of building a railroad along the Snake River. The company furnished tents and a cook for the men. One weekend his parents went to Lewiston, Idaho and bought him a highchair. One day, while sleeping on the floor of the tent his mother looked in to check on him. He was asleep. A five-foot rattlesnake was coiled-up at the foot of the bed. His mother shot the snake with her husband's revolver which was kept on a chest of drawers just inside the tent. They kept the rattle in her sewing machine where Roy, as a boy, played with it. He writes: " I went to Albina-Homestead School when I was six years old. I came home and told my mother, "there are only three white kids in my class, me, Oliver and the Jap." "We were the only ones who could speak English. The rest of the class spoke German. They were from the Ukraine district in Russia. The Russian government had hired German farmers to try and teach the Russians farming."

George worked every summer starting at age thirteen. He worked as a carpenter on the Maryhurst College buildings for his future wife's father, J.J. Tranchell. He and Katherine moved to San Francisco where he went broke on borrowed money leasing a service station. It took the W.P.A. six months during the Roosevelt Administration to pave the street in front of his station. "When they were through, so was I", he wrote. He took Civil Service examinations and served as a hearing officer for the Secretary of the Treasury's office. He became a "revenuer" as an employee in the branch of the Internal Revenue Service. There he supervised the production, storage, and tax payment of beer, wine and distilled spirits. The men in the enforcement division were the men that chased the "boot-legger's."

In 1986 George Hurlburt put-together a collection of "sketches" describing some of his experiences as a "revenuer." I have presented only a few of them here. He had changed the names and locations "to protect the memory of those long-gone to a place we all hope is free of taxes", he wrote.

Roy Hurlburt died August 15, 2001 at the age of almost 96. He is interred in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery, Portland, Oregon. I'm sorry that I never met him. I know I would have liked him.